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VLADIMIR AND THE ORIGIN OF THE RUSSIAN CHURCH

THE Baptism of Prince Vladimir (978-1015) at the end of the 10th century, followed by the conversion of the nation to Christianity, is one of the most studied episodes in the early history of Russia ; but it is so beset by problems that it has been a subject of dispute from the middle of the 11th century until the present day. The origins of the Russian Church were examined in detail in Russia in the 19th and especially in the first decade of the 20th century.¹ During the last twenty years the same subject has once more attracted much attention. A number of publications dealing with it have appeared in Europe and on the other side of the Atlantic.² Their authors have carefully scrutinised the Scandinavian Sagas, Western Chronicles, the writings of Byzantine, Arab and Armenian historians for their references to Russia of the 10th and 11th centuries, and as the result some obscure points especially connected with Vladimir's own baptism, have been clarified by comparing the data of the Russian Chronicles with the facts given in non-Russian sources. Attempts to solve the problems of the original organisation of the Russian Church have been less satisfactory, and conflicting theories still exist. Prof. Vernadsky, for instance, considers that the Russian Church was under the Archbishops of Tmutorkan during the first fifty years of its existence. Mr. Jugie sees it as a part of the Roman Province ; Mr. Laurent and Mr. Honigsmann think that it was from the beginning controlled by the Patriarchate of Constantinople. M. Priselkov's suggestion, made in 1913,³ that the Russian Church was under the jurisdiction of Ochrida also finds qualified ⁴ and unqualified supporters,⁵ and these disagreements have caused a serious gap in the present understanding of the important period when the foundations of the Russian Church and State were laid.

The purpose of this article is to return to the Russian sources once more, chiefly to the Chronicles, and in the light of the latest research to examine their accounts of the last twenty-five years of Vladimir's reign. The major difficulty here is not lack of information but its biased nature ; and the success of this study depends therefore, to a large extent, on the ability to discover the causes of the ambiguity of the existing text of *The Tale of Bygone Years* (Povest Vremenykh Let) hereafter referred to as the *Povest*.⁶

I

This important document forms an introduction to the majority of Russian Chronicles. Its oldest, and therefore most authentic, versions are found in the *Lavrentievsky* (1377) ⁷ and *Ipatievsky* ⁸ (end of 14th century) *Chronicles* which are almost identical as far as the *Povest* is concerned, except for their chronology. Though these copies of the *Povest* are separated by some two hundred and fifty years from its compilation, the close resemblance of these versions suggests that its text was standardised at some early date and adhered to by later copyists.

Besides the *Povest*, the *Chronicle of Novgorod* also contain some valuable information about the origin of the Russian Church.⁹ Unfortunately its oldest copy, the so-called "Synodical," ¹⁰ which dates probably from the 13th century ¹¹ lacks the first hundred and twenty-eight pages, covering the period from the 9th century till 1016. Though the missing parts can be restored from some later manuscripts, these may have been affected by various alterations. Much additional information, not found either in the *Povest* or "Novgorodsky" chronicle, is preserved in the later collections of Russian Chronicles, like that of Nikon,¹² which was composed in the 16th century. Its compilers may have used manuscripts which were of equal if not greater authority than the present text of Lavrentievsky's chronicle, but which have since been lost. Several facts recorded in the Nikon Chronicle may have been borrowed from these ancient sources. Unfortunately, however, the compilers of this 16th-century chronicle also incorporated into their narratives various episodes of doubtful origin which have caused them to be discredited by modern historians. The same can be said about Tatishchev's *History of Russia*.¹³ He had access to several ancient documents, unfortunately no longer traceable, but he lacked the ability to discriminate between reliable and unreliable information.

Besides the Chronicles there are several other Russian works of the 11th century dealing with Prince Vladimir. The most important of them is *The Memorial and Praise of Prince Vladimir*, attributed to the Monk Jacob.¹⁴ Its chronology of Vladimir's conversion differs from that given by the *Povest*, and appears to be the more authentic of the two. The eloquent treatise on "Law and Grace" composed by the Metropolitan Hilarion between 1037 and 1050 also gives a vivid portrait of the great Prince.¹⁵ This cannot be said, however, about the life of "the Blessed Vladimir," which contains a great deal of legendary material. A. A. Shakhmatov made a successful recon-

struction of its original text, but even in his purged edition there is more fiction than history.¹⁶

Thus it is possible to summarise the survey of Russian sources in the following way : The *Povest* remains the main source, but the facts and dates reported in it have to be checked and corrected by the earlier descriptions of Vladimir's conversion as preserved by the Chronicle of Novgorod and in the writings of the Monk Jacob and the Metropolitan Hilarion. The later chronicles and Tatishchev should be used only with considerable caution.

The origin of the *Povest*, its author or authors, and the date of its composition have been closely studied by many Russian historians. The older school of these, typified by Makari,¹⁷ considered the *Povest* to be a trustworthy account of bygone years, recorded some time in the 11th century by a simple but devout monk. This point of view was seriously challenged at the end of the last century, when contradictions and inaccuracies were noticed in the narrative of the *Povest*. Its author, once highly esteemed, was discredited and treated as an ignorant and bigoted ecclesiastic, unable to distinguish between fact and fiction.¹⁸ A further development in the study of the *Povest* took place when A. A. Shakhmatov (d. 1916) discovered the composite nature of this document. Owing to his knowledge of the text he was able to trace several revisions of the *Povest* (1095, 1112, 1116, 1118), in the course of which its narrative had been considerably altered to correspond with the ecclesiastical tendencies of its successive editors.¹⁹ Shakhmatov's theory is generally accepted to-day, but it tends to minimise the importance of the central figure—the original compiler, who selected from the varied materials at his disposal the facts which he deemed necessary to preserve, and arranged them in accordance with his own preconceived ideas. Shakhmatov's absorption in textual criticism led him to lay too much emphasis on the idea that the *Povest* was a mosaic of haphazardly collected stories put together by different men who often sharply disagreed with each other. Prof. S. H. Cross's opinion about the authorship corrects this bias and is the more balanced judgment on this controversial subject. He returned to the traditional view that, in its main outlines, the *Povest* is the work of a single author. "It is not intrinsically impossible that the entire *Povest* was written or compiled by one monk of the Crypt Monastery in Kiev in the course of the second half of the 11th century."²⁰

It is evident that the *Povest* could never have been produced by the uncoordinated efforts of several writers : it bears the imprint of a single mind too clearly. Though the name of the author is

disputed ²¹ he can almost certainly be identified with the young monk who, according to his own account, ²² at the age of seventeen (about 1065-1070), was received into the Monastery of the Crypt by Theodosius (d. 1074), and who finished his literary career some time between 1110 and 1120. But even if the biography of this outstanding man is still unknown, it is possible to reconstruct the principles he upheld and the methods he used to impress his political and ecclesiastical creed upon the minds of his readers. Prof. N. K. Nikolsky describes the author of the *Povest* in the following way: "We are dealing here neither with the compilation of a naïve scribe nor with an impartial historical record, nor even with ancient legends, but with the work of a mature historian with a distinct outlook." ²³ The author of the *Povest* was a militant churchman who believed ardently that Byzantine Orthodoxy with its centre at Constantinople was the only pure source of Christian enlightenment for the whole world: at the same time he was a patriotic Russian, who considered the Princes of the House of Rurik as the sole legitimate rulers of his country, and the best guarantors of its integrity and independence. He expressed these convictions with such force and ability that they became accepted by later generations of Russian political and ecclesiastical leaders. Thus the compiler of the *Povest* appears not as a dispassionate scholar but as an experienced controversialist who wrote a biased story of Russia's conversion with the avowed intention of influencing the future of his country. ²⁴ At the same time he was able to present his prejudices disguised as impartial and well-documented narrative. ²⁵

Nevertheless, this does not mean that the compiler was altogether an untrustworthy historian. He had access to authentic documents, and he relied on eye-witnesses. He says, for example, that he knew a monk called Eremia, who remembered Russia's conversion to Christianity. ²⁶ It is also probable that he was acquainted with the famous St. Nikon (d. 1088) who, according to Priselkov's suggestion, ²⁷ was no other than the Metropolitan Hilarion, the best informed Russian ecclesiastical leader of the century. Moreover, the compiler was writing when other versions of Russia's change of religion were probably in circulation ²⁸ and this made it impossible for him to present a too arbitrary story of the great event.

The *Povest*, therefore, contains fragments of authentic information, grouped in such a way as to convey the impression desired by its author. But if there are disadvantages in dealing with an account representing a party point of view, there is also the advantage of possessing a document written by an intelligent and able

man, who knew the facts and selected them with great care to suit his object. He left to modern historians the task of regrouping them so that events would appear in their original sequence.

2

A good introduction to the study of his handling of historical material is a comparison of the story of Vladimir's baptism, as narrated by the compiler with the facts gathered from other sources, both Russian and non-Russian.²⁹ The latter suggest the following sequence of events: The crushing defeat suffered by the Imperial army at the hands of the Bulgarians (17 August 986) provided a dramatic opening for the conversion of the Russian Kagan to the Byzantine tradition of Christianity. The loss of their army forced Basil II (976-1025) and his brother Constantine to change their hostile attitude to the Kievan ruler. The young Emperors were in desperate need of allies: they sacrificed their pride and sent envoys to Kiev, offering their friendship to Vladimir in return for his military aid. The Imperial Embassy was warmly welcomed in the Russian capital since the request brought by it provided Vladimir with an opportunity to make his Empire a part of Christendom under the most favourable circumstances.

Meanwhile the position of the Brother Emperors grew even more desperate owing to a rebellion of the Asiatic army, started by Bardas Phocas on 15 August 987. The situation was such that the Kagan was able to demand almost any price for his help. The conditions laid down by Vladimir may only be surmised, but they probably included such points as his marriage with the Basiliv's sister, as a pledge of his incorporation on the Imperial family; and the establishment in Russia of a Church with Bishops whose titles and status would be adequate to the power and prestige of the Kievan Empire. Though it is impossible to glean the details of these discussions, it is apparent that they were concluded in the shortest possible time, and that it was Vladimir who dictated the conditions. In accordance with the agreement reached, Vladimir was baptised, most probably on his estate near Kiev,³⁰ known later as Vasiliev,³¹ either at the close of 987 or in the first two months of 988.³² He chose the name "Basil" (Vasili) which was the same as the Emperor's.

Vladimir's next move was to send a company of his best troops to the rescue of the Emperors and to demand the dispatch of their sister, Anna, in return. He left Kiev in 988 at the head of his army but probably did not himself go further than the cataracts,³⁴ while six thousand of his men sailed to Constantinople. The arrival of

this force at once altered the balance of power on the shores of the Bosphorous. The Emperors, who had hardly any territory except the capital left to them by the spring of 988, immediately launched a successful counter-offensive against the rebel general, Bardas Phocas. The excellence of Vladimir's troops was such that they were victorious in all their engagements, and on the night of April 12/13, 989 Phocas was finally defeated and died on the battle-field. The flame of rebellion enveloping the entire Asiatic part of the Empire was suddenly extinguished, and Basil and Constantine saw themselves transformed overnight into the undisputed masters of the greatest and strongest Christian State.

It would be too much to expect of these men that at the moment of their triumph they should keep the terms of agreement forced upon them by a barbarian Prince in a time of extreme danger. Vladimir was quickly informed that Anna was unwilling to marry him. Probably the Emperors hoped that now they had little to fear from their rejected brother-in-law, but they underestimated his determination. Vladimir did not reconcile himself to defeat but devised a new scheme and at once rushed his troops towards the Crimea. By 27 July, 989, three months after Basil's victory over Phocas, the Kagan of Kiev was in control of Kherson, the supposedly impregnable stronghold of the Byzantines on the Northern side of the Black Sea. Though his victory was spectacular yet it is doubtful whether by itself it could have induced the Emperors to surrender. But Vladimir had luck on his side. The fall of Kherson coincided with the outbreak of another rebellion in Asia Minor, started this time by Bardas Sclerus, and the combination of these two attacks forced the Emperors to fulfil their original bargain, and to send their sister Anna to the Crimea. The wedding was celebrated in Kherson in the autumn of 989. Vladimir thus attained his ambition; he became a brother-in-law of the Basileus—a Monarch equal to them in power and honour.

He spent the winter in the Crimea, and in the spring of 990 started on his triumphant homeward journey, accompanied by his wife and clergy, carrying precious relics and the necessary Church equipment for the immediate Christianisation of his vast dominion. He reached his capital in the summer of 990, and at once began to organise the mass baptism of his people. This commenced at Kiev and continued in all the principal cities of his realm.

Such is the story of Vladimir's conversion, as drawn from Byzantine and other sources. It must now be compared with the narrative of the same events in the *Povest*.

This version also starts with the Bulgarian campaign of 986³⁵ followed by the description of the intense diplomatic negotiations between Vladimir and his neighbours. These discussions are fully reported in the *Povest*; but all political implications are carefully concealed and they are presented solely as a contest between spokesmen of different religions who all endeavour to win the Kagan over to their side. The victory is ascribed by the *Povest* to the envoy of the Byzantine Empire, introduced as a Greek Philosopher. But though Vladimir is fully convinced of the truth of Eastern Orthodoxy he hesitates to be baptised and decides "yet to wait a little."³⁶

The first part of the narrative of Vladimir's conversion is almost entirely taken up by a verbose and in part distorted exposition of Eastern Orthodox doctrine, which the *Povest* assigns to the Greek Philosopher.³⁷ According to Shakhmatov this confession was borrowed by the compiler from the story of King Boris of Bulgaria's conversion to Christianity in 864-865.³⁸ This ill-constructed admonition was intended to conceal the humiliating surrender of the Byzantine Empire to the political and ecclesiastical demands of the Russian Kagan. It is interesting, however, that the compiler was careful to omit all the references to the historical personalities mentioned in the Bulgarian document—such as Constantine, the name of the Philosopher, or Leontius the Metropolitan, or Photius the Patriarch of Constantinople. These names, however, reappeared in the Russian Chronicles of the 15th and 16th centuries when the memory of events of the 10th century was sufficiently obliterated.³⁹

Having succeeded in concealing the plight of the Byzantine Empire during the years 986-987 by means of a theological smoke-screen, the author used another method in dealing with the expeditionary force sent by Vladimir to Constantinople. This expedition was described under the wrong year (980), and was presented in such a way as to suggest that Vladimir was obliged to send away his best troops to the Emperor as he had no means of supporting them.⁴⁰ Thus the compiler was able to present the events during the three fatal years, 986, 987, 988, in a suitable disguise, still adhering to the facts and yet avoiding any acknowledgment of political motives or any confession of Byzantine weakness. The year 989 proved the hardest to camouflage, and here his ingenuity was put to the most exacting test. He was confronted with the two tasks: (a) introducing Vladimir's campaign in the Crimea, and (b) reporting the capture of Korsun (under this name Kherson is described by the *Povest*) by the victorious Russian army.

The *Povest* was unable to provide any plausible reason for

Vladimir's attack, for it had consistently misrepresented all the events that led up to it, and therefore had to introduce the Crimean campaign without any logical sequence and in direct contradiction to the theological victory of the Greek Philosopher, which immediately preceded the description of the war against the Greeks. Its culminating point, the surrender of Korsun, had to be acknowledged; but in order to mitigate its effect, the *Povest* added an invented episode about Vladimir's blindness and his subsequent baptism in the city itself. Thus it could appear that the surrender of the city was providential, as the irresolute Russian Prince could only be brought to the baptismal font by such dramatic occurrences as the loss of his sight and the fall of a Byzantine stronghold.

This was the weakest link in the carefully constructed chain of interpolations. The author had to falsify both the date and the place of such an important event as the baptism of the Russian Prince.⁴² In order to defend his weak position, the compiler launched a spirited counter-attack against those who insisted that Vladimir was baptised in Vasiliev.⁴³ To make the position of his opponents worse, the compiler ascribed to them the lack of agreement as to the place of the Prince's baptism, mentioning the circulation of conflicting reports among "ignorant" people.⁴⁴ The *Povest* ended its narrative with Vladimir's triumphant return to Kiev and the mass baptism of its inhabitants. This comparison between the version here given and the most probable reconstruction of the same events is instructive. It shows the *Povest* to be well-acquainted with the key facts of Vladimir's change of religion; but their historical sequence is upset, and the motives behind the Prince's actions are obscured. This object is achieved by the deliberate misrepresentation of his character. In the *Povest* Vladimir appears prior to his conversion as sensual and weak, easily intimidated and lamentably lacking in will-power; for a long time he cannot make up his mind to embrace Christianity; even when, having been frightened by a picture of the Last Judgment, he decides to be baptised, he postpones the realisation of his plan till blindness forces him to act. This portrait contrasts with the picture of the same Prince, as drawn by Hilarion, who praised the Kievan Kagan as one of the greatest rulers of Russia—a man who dictated his will to Constantinople, brought about the conversion of his people, and maintained unchallenged control over his vast Empire for some thirty-five years.

This misrepresentation of the Kievan Prince and the careful omission of all reference to the political motives accompanying his

conversion create the impression that the compiler wanted to present the Christianisation of his country as an event which had a purely religious significance. The Byzantine Church, according to his version, handed over to the Russians the treasure of its Orthodoxy moved solely by its own missionary zeal, whilst the Russians received it with childlike simplicity and joy. Throughout the whole narrative the supremacy of religion over the secular, of the Church over State, is consistently maintained.

3

Having established the tendencies and the technique used by the compiler covering the years 986-990, one might well expect the same author to treat the next period in a similar spirit. The first thing that impresses the reader of the next chapter is the scarcity of information about the Christian period of Vladimir's reign. The author of the *Povest* seems to have exhausted his interest in Vladimir after dealing with the conversion. He filled page after page with the interminable discourse of the Greek Philosopher, but of the actual establishment of the Church among the Russian people he had very little to say. The few references to Vladimir's ecclesiastical policy are confined to the years immediately following his baptism; and they stop altogether after 996, when the Cathedral of Kiev was solemnly handed over to the clergy by its Prince-Founder. There are two possible explanations of this attitude: either that period of Russian history was so uneventful that nothing happened worth mentioning, or that Vladimir's conduct was so much disapproved of by the compiler that he preferred to bury it in silence. It is difficult to accept the first explanation. Vladimir's reign saw one of the greatest cultural revolutions in the history of Russia and this does not tally with the series of years when nothing is reported by the *Povest* except the deaths of members of Vladimir's family.

The second explanation is more convincing as it makes sense of the scattered references to the Church of that period found in the *Povest*. These begin with the entry under the year 989: "After these events Vladimir lived according to Christian law; and he decided to build a stone Church dedicated to the Holy Mother of God; and he brought the craftsmen from Greece, and adorned it with Ikons, and entrusted it to Anastas Korsunin. He appointed priests from Korsun to serve in it." ⁴⁵ Under 6504 (996) the *Povest* states: "Vladimir, upon seeing his Church completed, entered it and prayed to God . . . and he added, 'I bestow a tithe of my property and of my cities upon this Church of the Holy Mother of

God!’ And he gave the tithe to Anastas Korsunin and made a great festival on that day for his Nobles and for the Elders of the people, distributing also much alms amongst the poor.”⁴⁶

Under the same year further details are given about Vladimir’s changed conduct as a result of his conversion: his unbounded generosity to all the sick, afflicted and distressed; his unwillingness to inflict the death penalty upon anybody, including robbers, owing to his fear of “sin”; and the rebukes he received from the Bishops on account of his clemency.⁴⁷ The last entry referring to the Church is found under 1007 but it has no importance: it merely states that the remains of his son Iziaslav and of his grandson Vseslav were transferred to the Church of the Mother of God.⁴⁸

The first chronicle of Novgorod has several references to Vladimir’s ecclesiastical policy,⁴⁹ which however only differ verbally from the text of the *Povest*. But under the year 989 it gives the name of the first Bishop of Novgorod, an important contribution to knowledge, for no bishop is mentioned by his title in the *Povest*, until the Greek Metropolitan Theopemt is introduced under the year 1039.⁵⁰ The Chronicle of Novgorod says: “Vladimir and the whole Russian land were baptised and the Metropolitan was appointed in Kiev, and an Archbishop in Novgorod, and priests and deacons, and there was joy everywhere. And Archbishop Akim Korsunin came to Novgorod and destroyed the heathen temples.”⁵¹ The same chronicle gives the list of the Kievan Bishops, starting with Theopemt, and of the Novgorod Bishops headed by Akim Korsunin.⁵²

These few remarks, chiefly relating to the foundation of the Cathedral of Kiev, are all that the *Povest* and the Chronicle of Novgorod have to say about the initial organisation of the Russian Church. This information would help little to solve this problem but for several references to a man called Anastas the Korsunin, who is regarded both by the *Povest* and the Chronicle of Novgorod as the key ecclesiastical personage of Vladimir’s reign, and who alone is mentioned by his Christian name several times in these documents. The correct interpretation of Vladimir’s Church policy depends, therefore, to a considerable extent on the more precise definition of Anastas’ hierarchal status. He can justly be described as the mystery man of Vladimir’s Empire. He suddenly appears on the scene during the siege of Korsun in 989, is mentioned by the *Povest* more often than any other man during the remaining years of Vladimir’s reign, and then vanishes from Kiev in 1018, in the train of the retreating army of Boleslav, King of Poland.

His career can be best studied by examining all the references made to him in the *Povest*. He is mentioned first as a traitor who shot an arrow into the Russian camp from the walls of besieged Korsun ; the secret message attached to it helped Vladimir to cut off the city from its water supplies, and led to the quick surrender of the fortress.⁵³ The second reference to Anastas is very different : he has changed his rôle of audacious adventurer for the honourable position of an important dignitary. The *Povest* narrative runs as follows : " Hereupon Vladimir took the Tsaritsa (Anna) and Anastas, and the priests from Korsun together with the relics of St. Clement and of his disciple Phœbus, and selected also sacred vessels and Ikons for the services." ⁵⁴ All further references to Anastas indicate that he was the leader of the Kievan clergy, a person responsible for the Cathedral and the finance of the whole Church. In 992 Vladimir hands over the Cathedral to him,⁵⁵ and in 996 he is appointed by the Prince to be the recipient of the tithe ⁵⁶ ; but on none of these occasions is any explanation given as to his hierarchical position. He is invariably described as Anastas " Korsunin." In its last reference to him the *Povest* relates that when in 1018 Boleslav, King of Poland, fled from Kiev " he took with him Jaroslav's property and the boyars, as well as Jaroslav's two sisters and Anastas the tithesman, whom he appointed as the guardian of the property, as the latter had won his confidence by his flattery." ⁵⁷ In this quotation Anastas is described as the tithesman, but this does not help to clarify the situation, since no such office is known in any period of Russian history, and this is the only reference to it in the Chronicles. It is clear that the compiler of the *Povest* had no intention of stating precisely Anastas' position, and probably hoped that his readers would find it difficult to place Vladimir's favourite anywhere in the hierarchical scale. If such was his intention he certainly succeeded, for ancient and modern students of the *Povest* have become hopelessly confused, and have as a result failed to understand the constitution of the Russian Church during the first decades of its history.

Three different suggestions regarding Anastas' identity are possible : he could be a layman appointed by Vladimir to look after the finances of his Church : he could be the presiding presbyter of the Cathedral of the Tithe : and he could be the leading Bishop of the Russian Church. The narrative of the *Povest* permits any of these three solutions, and both the Chroniclers of the 15th and 16th centuries, as well as modern historians, have defended one or other of these points of view.⁵⁸

At first sight it seems more in accordance with the present text

of the *Povest* to regard Anastas as a layman, but this creates a number of serious difficulties. It is hard to explain, for instance, why a layman is not only singled out and called by his Christian name whenever Church matters attract the attention of the *Povest*, but (and this is still more perplexing) why he is always mentioned in front of the priests, in a place normally belonging to a Bishop.

There are two possible explanations of this treatment of a layman: First, that Vladimir deliberately tried to break away from the traditional order of the Church and appointed a layman as the leader of the clergy. Such a supposition is obviously incompatible with the temper of the epoch, and clashes with the high praise given to Vladimir by such strictly orthodox theologians as the Metropolitan Hilarion and the Monk Jacob, both of whom compared the Prince to Constantine the Great. The second explanation is that Vladimir selected Anastas as a candidate for the Episcopate, but for some unknown reason he could not be ordained, and remained till the end a Bishop-designate. This is plausible but it conflicts with the appointment of Joachim as a bishop to Novgorod, who, like Anastas, was brought by Vladimir from Korsun.⁵⁹ If the Russian Prince was able to secure episcopal ordination for one of his candidates it is probable that he could do the same for his favourite—Anastas. Besides, the Chronicle of Novgorod states explicitly that Vladimir had a Bishop of Kiev⁶⁰ and the *Povest* confirms it by describing the consultations which he had with his episcopate there.⁶¹

If the second alternative, that Anastas was a presbyter, is accepted—the point of view shared by the majority of later chroniclers—some of the difficulties disappear at once. For instance, it becomes natural that Vladimir entrusted the Holy Ikons, the relics, and the whole fabric of the Cathedral to Anastas as the senior presbyter, as is twice stated by the *Povest*.⁶² But new difficulties are raised when he is considered as presbyter, the main one being the explanation of the unwillingness of the *Povest* to call Anastas a priest. He is always mentioned together with other priests but he is never identified with them; on the contrary he is presented as a superior to the rest of the clergy. If Anastas was a priest there seems to be no plausible reason why the *Povest* would not state it plainly. Besides, if Anastas was a leading layman or a presiding presbyter such interpretations of his position would presuppose the existence of some other cleric in Kiev as its Bishop. Scholars holding these views, with few exceptions, trusted the reliability of the later Russian Chronicles, which mentioned Michael, Leo and John as the first Kievan Bishops.⁶³

There is, however, sufficient evidence to-day that none of these was a contemporary ⁶⁴ of Vladimir, and this means that no bishop of Kiev is known from that period, except Anastas.⁶⁵ In the absence of a prelate who could be placed on the Metropolitan Seat of Russia, the leading and yet non-episcopal status assigned to Anastas becomes highly improbable.

The inconsistency and obscurity of the *Povest* disappears, however, as soon as the word "Bishop" is put in front of "Anastas"; with such an addition all the references to him become comprehensible and the narrative convincing. But there is one strong objection to this, viz. the refusal of the *Povest* itself to call Anastas a bishop.⁶⁶ This obstacle is not so formidable as it may appear at first, for though it is difficult to explain why the *Povest* should avoid calling Anastas a priest (if he was one of the clergy) it is, on the contrary, easy to discern the motives behind the *Povest's* refusal to call him a bishop. Such an unwillingness could be caused by the compiler's disapproval of the first Kievan Bishop: in that case he could not start a frontal attack upon him, for this would seriously discredit Vladimir's Christianisation of the country. Equally, he could not remain entirely silent about Anastas, for he wrote when the latter was still remembered by the people. So he was left with the third possibility of calling him merely Anastas Korsunin. By so doing he could express his opposition to the prelate and yet avoid an open clash with those who venerated the memory of the great Prince. If this interpretation is correct, then the method used was truly ingenious: ⁶⁷ the compiler reserved for the senior hierarch a prominent place in his narrative, and yet described him in such a way that the bulk of the readers could easily draw wrong conclusions about the constitution of the Russian Church.

Such an approach to the *Povest* narrative reveals something more important than the bare name of the Bishop of Kiev, for Anastas provides an important clue to the general understanding of Vladimir's ecclesiastical policy. He is introduced by the *Povest* as a traitor to his city and also as a person who, at the risk of his own life helped Vladimir to capture the Byzantine stronghold. The implications of this incident are clear: Vladimir offered the highest ecclesiastical honours to the man who served him faithfully. Thus Vladimir appears in a new light, as a ruler who was determined to keep the Church under his unchallenged control, who wanted to remain an autocrat not only in the sphere of politics and military matters, but also in the administration of ecclesiastical affairs. He chose as his chief bishop neither a Byzantine hierarch, nor a Latin

prelate with their allegiances to their superiors, but his own trusted man whose complete obedience he had no reason to doubt.⁶⁸ Vladimir is enshrined in the memory of the nation as the Founder of the Church. All other leaders, including Anastas, Dobrynia and Putiata were mere executors of his will. The compiler's refusal to describe Anastas as a bishop must not be attributed, therefore, to the personal defects of the Kievan prelate, but to the general trend of Vladimir's ecclesiastical designs.

(To be concluded)

N. ZERNOV.

¹ An excellent summary of the conclusions then reached is given in an article by Polonskaia, *K voprosu o Khristianstve na Rusi do Vladimira*, Zhurnal Ministerstva Norod. Prosv, 1917, N71, pp. 53-80.

² The following list of some of them will indicate the extent of recent research :—

V. Zaikin, *Christianity in the Ukraine during the time of Jaropolk* (967-79) *Analekta Ordinis*, S. Basili III (1928), 1-2 (in Ukrainian).

E. Shmurlo, *Where and When was Vladimir Baptized?* (in Russian), Praha, 1926.

N. de Baumgarten, *Le dernier Mariage de St Vladimir*, *Orientalia Christiana*, vol. XVIII (1930).

N. de Baumgarten, *Olaf Trygvason roi de Norvege et ses relations avec St. Vladimir de Russie*, *Orientalia Christiana*, vol. XXIV (1931).

N. de Baumgarten, *St. Vladimir et la conversion de la Russie*. *Orientalia Christiana*, vol. XXVII, 1932.

Bakhrushin, *The Question of the Conversion of the Kievan Rus.*, *Istorik Marksist* (in Russian), 1937, vol. 2 (60).

M. Jugie, *Les Origines romaines de l'Église Russe*, *Echos d'Orient*, XXXVII, Paris, 1937.

Fedotov, *Le Baptisme de Saint Vladimir et la Conversion de la Russie*. *Irenikon*, XV, 1938.

H. Koch, *Byzans, Ochrid and Kiev* : "Kyrios" III, 1938.

J. Danzas, *St. Vladimir et les Origines du Christianisme en Russie*. "Russie et Christiente," 1938-1939, N1.

V. Mochine, *Christianity in Russia before St. Vladimir* (Vladimirsky Sbornik), Beograd, 1938.

Prof. G. Ostrogorsky, *St. Vladimir and Byzantium* (Vladimirsky Sbornik), Beograd, 1938).

V. Laurent, *Aux Origines de l'Église Russe*, *Echoes d'Orient*, XXXVIII, 1938.

G. Vernadsky, *The Status of the Russian Church during the First Half-century following Vladimir's Conversion*, *Slavonic Year-book*, 1941.

Ernest Honigmann, *Studies in Slavic Church History*. The Metropolitan Theotemptos "Byzantion," *American series III*, vol. XVII, 1945.

M. de Taube, *Rome et la Russie avant l'Invasion des Tartars* (IX-XIII siècles), Paris, 1947.

³ M. Priselkov, *The Outlines of the Ecclesiastical and Political History of Kievan Russia* (10-11 centuries), St. Petersburg, 1913.

⁴ Slaviansky Sbornik, Moscow, 1947. Tikhomirov, p. 156.

⁵ Koch and Fedotov Tomasivsky, *Vstup do Istorii Cerkvy na Ukraini*, *Analekta Ordinis S. Basili 4* (1931), also defends Priselkov's Thesis.

⁶ All further quotations from the *Povest* follow the English version of Samuel Cross, *The Russian Primary Chronicle*, Harv. Univ. Press, 1930.

⁷ *Polnoe Sobranie Russkikh Letopisei*, vol. I, St. Pet., 1846.

⁸ *Pol. Sob. Rus. Let.*, vol. II, St. Pet., 1843; 2nd ed., St. Pet., 1871.

⁹ *Novgorodskaya Letopis*, St. Pet., 1888.

¹⁰ A. Shakhmatov, *Account of the text of Novgorod Chronicle*, in the *Chronicle of Novgorod*, Camden 3rd series, vol. XXV, Lond., 1914.

¹¹ The first half of this manuscript (1016-1200) probably belongs to the beginning of the 13th century and is therefore the earliest copy of any Russian Chronicles in existence. See *Nov. Let.*, St. Pet., 1888. *Introd.* p. VI.

- ¹² *Nikonovskaia Letopis*, Pol. Sob. Rus. Let., vol. IX-XII, St. Pet., 1862-1901.
- ¹³ *Istoria Rossiiskaia*, Vol. 1-4, Moscow, 1768-1784.
- ¹⁴ *Pamiat i Pokhvala Vladimira*. Golubinsky, *History of the Russian Church*, vol. I, pp. 238-45.
- ¹⁵ *Slovo o Zakone i Blagodati*, edited A. V. Gorski, *Pamiatniki Dukhovnoi Literatura*, Moscow, 1847.
- ¹⁶ "Pamiat Blagovernago Kniazia Vladimira" *Sbornik statei, posviashchennykh*, V. I. Lamanskomu, St. Pet., 1907-1908, vol. II, pp. 1138-48.
- ¹⁷ Archimandrite Makari, *History of Christianity in Russia before Prince Vladimir* (in Russian), St. Pet., 1846, p. 334. ¹⁸ Golubinsky, vol. I, p. 112.
- ¹⁹ Shakhmatov, *Rozyskaniia o drevneishikh Russkikh Svodakh*, St. Pet., 1908, also *Povest Vrem*, Let. Academia, Moscow, 1930. The latest study of *Povest*: D. Likhachev, *Russian Chronicles*, Academia Moscow, 1947.
- ²⁰ *The Russian Primary Chronicle*, p. 85.
- ²¹ Istrin, *Moravskaia Istoria Slavian*, Byzantinoslavica (1931), p. 315, thinks that the compiler's name was Nestor; Priselkov, *Nestor Letopisets*, Pet., 1923, p. 102 sq., identifies the compiler with the author of the life of St. Theodosius and of St. Boris and St. Gleb. ²² Lav., p. 69.
- ²³ Nikolsky, "Povest as Source for the History of the Early Period of Russian Literature and Culture." Leningrad. Academy 1930. p. 100.
- ²⁴ Eremin, *Povest Vrem. Let.*, Lening., 1947, pp. 20 sq.
- ²⁵ Nikolsky, *op. cit.*, p. 48. ²⁶ Lav., p. 81.
- ²⁷ Priselkov, "Outlines," pp. 183 sq.
- ²⁸ Tatischev, vol. I, p. 29 sqq. Golubinsky, *op. cit.*, I, pp. 12 sq.
- ²⁹ See Priselkov, *op. cit.*, pp. 26-35, and Baumgarten, *St. Vladimir*, pp. 72-73.
- ³⁰ Golubinsky, *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 133.
- ³¹ The name of the estate, *Vasiliev*, identical with Vladimir's Christian name Vasili, suggests that it was chosen by the Kagan as the place for his baptism.
- ³² The Russian calendar at that time fixed the New Year on March 1st, hence the possible divergency between the various sources giving 987 and 988 as the year of his baptism.
- ³³ Some Arab historians report that Vladimir went himself to Constantinople. Modern historians are divided on this point, see Baumgarten, *St. Vladimir*, pp. 73-77.
- ³⁴ Lav., p. 31. ³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 45.
- ³⁶ In Lavrent Chronicles out of fourteen pages dedicated to Vladimir's conversion nine are taken up by the philosopher's speech.
- ³⁷ See Shakhmatov: *Odin iz istochnikov Letopisnago skazania o kreshchenii Vladimira*, p. 68, Kharkov, 1905.
- ³⁸ Shakhmatov, *ibid.*, p. 70. ³⁹ Lav., pp. 33-34.
- ⁴⁰ Monk Jacob in his *Memorial of Prince Vladimir* gives the following chronology of the same events. "Vladimir lived after his baptism 28 years (987-1015). The next year after baptism he went to the cataracts, in the third year he captured the city of Korsun, in the fourth year he laid the foundation of the stone Church of the Holy Mother of God . . . he died in peace on 15th July 1015." *Drevne Russ. Letop.*, Academia Moscow, 1936, p. 332.
- ⁴¹ The task was facilitated by the private character of the baptism of Vladimir, which took place away from the capital, on his own estate. Ignorance of it among the bulk of the people was therefore possible.
- ⁴² Lav., p. 48. ⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 52. Ipatiev, 1871, p. 83.
- ⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 53. ⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 54. ⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 55.
- ⁴⁷ Nov., 1888, p. 71 (991); compare Lav., p. 52; Nov., p. 71 (996); Lav., p. 53; Nov., p. 75 (1007); and Lav., p. 55.
- ⁴⁸ Lav., p. 66. ⁴⁹ Nov., 1888, p. 68. ⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 69.
- ⁵¹ Lav., p. 47. ⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 50. ⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 52.
- ⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 53. ⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 62.
- ⁵⁶ The Chronicle of Nikon treats Anastas as a layman. Nikon, IX, 66-67. Baumgarten, *St. Vladimir*, p. 105, and Golubinsky, I, p. 319, take the same point of view. Anastas is described as a priest by the following Chronicles: I Nov., p. 71. Sofilskaia, V, 121. Voskresenskaia, VIII, 313; Ermolin, XXIII, 16. Tipograf, XXIV, 39. Vernadsky, *The Status of the Russian Church*, p. 309, supports this opinion. Priselkov, *op. cit.*, p. 52 sq., treats Anastas as a Bishop of Kiev, and he is called Bishop in the "life of Blessed Vladimir." *Sbornik Posviash. Laman-skomu*, St. Pet., 1908, vol. II, pp. 1143-46.

⁵⁹ Nov., p. 68.⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 68.⁶¹ Lav., p. 54.⁶² *Ibid.*, pp. 62, 63.⁶³ See Golubinsky, vol. I, p. 354, who believed that Leo was the presiding Bishop of Vladimir's time.⁶⁴ The Chronicle of Nikon IX, pp. 57, 61, 65, gives the following list of Vladimir's prelates: Michael (989-992), Leo or Leon (992-1008), John (1008-1030). The first two bishops are described as sent to Vladimir by no less a person than the Patriarch Photius himself who died in 891, a hundred years before Russia's conversion to Christianity. This fact naturally raised an early doubt about the reliability of the information supplied by the latter Chronicles. The names of these bishops were, however, not simply invented in the 15th and 16th centuries; they were all historical personalities who lived either before or after Vladimir's time, and were chosen after careful search of all relevant documents by the Russian mediæval historians, who could not accept the strange fact that no bishops in Kiev were mentioned in the *Povest* until 1039. This proved that no document available in the 15th and 16th centuries contained any reference to the genuine bishops of Kiev from Vladimir's time. See Golubinsky, vol. I, p. 275; Taube, *Rome & la Russie*, pp. 44-45; Priselkov, *op. cit.*, pp. 39-40, 134-49; also Shakhmatov, *Odin iz istochnikov letopisnago skazaniia o Kreshchenii Vladimira*, Kharkov, 1905, pp. 72-73.⁶⁵ See the latest attempts to discover the name of Vladimir's bishop. Honigmann, *op. cit.*, pp. 148 sq., 157.⁶⁶ It is possible that some earlier Russian Chronicles called Anastas a bishop, but the authority enjoyed by the *Povest* gradually eliminated the use of this title. This can be deduced from the present text of the Novgorod Chronicle. It runs as follows: "When the Church (that of the Tithe) was finished and adorned with the Holy Ikons (Vladimir) entrusted it to a priest, Anastas; the bishops from Korsun he appointed to celebrate in it (991)," I Nov., p. 71. It is obvious that this text is identical with that of Lavrentievski's copy which, under the year 989, states: "When (Vladimir) finished the building of it (the Church of the Tithe) he adorned it with Ikons and entrusted it to Anastas Korsunin; and the priests from Korsun he appointed to celebrate in it." (Lav., p. 52.)⁶⁷ The Novgorod version as it stands at present is undoubtedly corrupt. It suggests an impossible constitution of the Cathedral Chapter in Kiev, which seems to consist of one presiding presbyter and a number of bishops. Lavrentievski's version corrects this error, but the question arises "how could the word 'bishops' get into the place of the word 'priests' in the Novgorod Chronicle?" The most plausible explanation is that the original version ran as follows: "entrusted it to a bishop Anastas; the priests from Korsun he appointed . . ." The copyist, however, thought that the order of the words "bishop" and "priest" became confused, for he had never heard of Anastas as a bishop of Kiev. Only a few pages earlier the same compiler inscribed a list of Kievan hierarchs copied from some other source, which started with Theopent (I Nov., p. 69), and thus ignored Anastas' existence. So the compiler put the word "priest" in the place of "bishop," and "bishop" in the place of "Priests"; but by so doing he created still greater confusion which he made no attempt to clarify.⁶⁸ The author of the *Povest* was not the only man who used this weapon against his ecclesiastical opponent. An interesting precedent is provided by German Bishops who in their "*Libellus conversione Bulgariorum et Carantorum*" (870/1) called the famous Archbishop Methodius sent to Moravia by the Pope as "quidam Græcus Methodius nomine." (Mon. Germ. Hist. S. Sm. XI, p. 1326.)⁶⁹ Shakhmatov in his article '*Korsunskaiia Legenda o Kreshchenii Vladimira*, Sbornik Lamanskago., p. 1117, expresses the opinion that another man, a Norman by name Zhdebern, sent the arrow into the Russian camp. The same Zhdebern was dispatched to Constantinople to make a peace treaty with the Emperors, and he brought back to the Crimea the Princess Anna. It is possible that Anastas was the Christian name of Zhdebern, and in that case Vladimir's choice of his chief ecclesiastical agent fell upon one of his old companions-in-arms. It is equally possible, however, that the plot to surrender the city was engendered by several people, including Zhdebern and Anastas. One thing remains obvious—Vladimir had associates and friends inside Korsun, and this is proved both by the quick surrender of the city and by the generous treatment of its inhabitants. It is clear also that Anastas was one of the most prominent men among Vladimir's supporters in the Crimea.